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DRICH

# Later Lyrics



# CHAUNCEY WETMORE WELLS

1872-1933



This book belonged to Chauncey Wetmore Wells. He taught in Yale College, of which he was a graduate, from 1897 to 1901, and from 1901 to 1933 at this University.

Chauncey Wells was, essentially, a scholar. The range of his reading was wide, the breadth of his literary sympathy as uncommon as the breadth of his human sympathy. He was less concerned with the collection of facts than with meditation upon their significance. His distinctive power lay in his ability to give to his students a subtle perception of the inner implications of form, of manners, of taste, of the really disciplined and discriminating mind. And this perception appeared not only in his thinking and teaching but also in all his relations with books and with men.

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## LATER LYRICS



T. B. ALDRICH

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# Later Lyrics

SELECTED FROM

MERCEDES

THE SISTERS' TRAGEDY

WYNDHAM TOWERS

AND

UNGUARDED GATES



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY

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1896

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IN MEMORIAM  
C. W. Wells



*The Riverside Press, Cambridge :*  
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*I would be the Lyric  
Ever on the lip,  
Rather than the Epic  
Memory lets slip.  
I would be the diamond  
At my lady's ear,  
Rather than the June-rose  
Worn but once a year.*



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## LATER LYRICS

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### I

#### SWEETHEART, SIGH NO MORE

It was with doubt and trembling  
I whispered in her ear.  
Go, take her answer, bird-on-bough,  
That all the world may hear —  
*Sweetheart, sigh no more !*

Sing it, sing it, tawny throat,  
Upon the wayside tree,  
How fair she is, how true she is,  
How dear she is to me —  
*Sweetheart, sigh no more !*

Sing it, sing it, tawny throat,  
And through the summer long

12 *SWEETHEART, SIGH NO MORE*

• The winds among the clover-tops,  
And brooks, for all their silvery stops,  
Shall envy you the song —  
Sweetheart, sigh no more!

## II

### MEMORY

My mind lets go a thousand things,  
Like dates of wars and deaths of kings,  
And yet recalls the very hour —  
'T was noon by yonder village tower,  
And on the last blue noon in May —  
The wind came briskly up this way,  
Crisping the brook beside the road ;  
Then, pausing here, set down its load  
Of pine-scents, and shook listlessly  
Two petals from that wild-rose tree.

### III

#### A TOUCH OF NATURE

WHEN first the crocus thrusts its point  
of gold  
Up through the still snow-drifted garden-  
mould,  
And folded green things in dim woods  
unclose  
Their crinkled spears, a sudden tremor  
goes  
Into my veins and makes me kith and  
kin  
To every wild-born thing that thrills and  
blows.  
Sitting beside this crumbling sea-coal  
fire,  
Here in the city's ceaseless roar and din,  
Far from the brambly paths I used to  
know,  
Far from the rustling brooks that slip  
and shine

Where the Neponset alders take their  
    glow,  
I share the tremulous sense of bud and  
    briar  
And inarticulate ardors of the vine.

IV

ALEC YEATON'S SON

GLOUCESTER, AUGUST, 1720

THE wind it wailed, the wind it moaned,  
And the white caps flecked the sea ;  
“ An’ I would to God,” the skipper  
groaned,  
“ I had not my boy with me ! ”

Snug in the stern-sheets, little John  
Laughed as the scud swept by ;  
But the skipper’s sunburnt cheek grew  
wan  
As he watched the wicked sky.

“ Would he were at his mother’s side ! ”  
And the skipper’s eyes were dim.  
“ Good Lord in heaven, if ill betide,  
What would become of him !

“ For me — my muscles are as steel,  
For me let hap what may ;



I might make shift upon the keel  
Until the break o' day.

“ But he, he is so weak and small,  
So young, scarce learned to stand —  
O pitying Father of us all,  
I trust him in Thy hand !

“ For Thou who markest from on high  
A sparrow's fall — each one ! —  
Surely, O Lord, thou 'lt have an eye  
On Alec Yeaton's son ! ”

Then, helm hard-port ; right straight he  
sailed  
Towards the headland light:  
The wind it moaned, the wind it wailed,  
And black, black fell the night.

Then burst a storm to make one quail,  
Though housed from winds and  
waves —  
They who could tell about that gale  
Must rise from watery graves !

Sudden it came, as sudden went ;  
Ere half the night was sped,

The winds were hushed, the waves  
    were spent,  
And the stars shone overhead.

Now, as the morning mist grew thin,  
    The folk on Gloucester shore  
Saw a little figure floating in  
    Secure, on a broken oar !

Up rose the cry, "A wreck ! a wreck !  
    Pull, mates, and waste no breath ! " —  
They knew it, though 't was but a speck  
    Upon the edge of death !

Long did they marvel in the town  
    At God his strange decree,  
That let the stalwart skipper drown  
    And the little child go free !

V

INVITA MINERVA

NOT of Desire alone is music born,  
Not till the Muse wills is our passion  
crowned ;

Unsought she comes ; if sought but seldom found,

Repaying thus our longing with her  
scorn.

Hence is it poets often are forlorn,  
In super-subtle chains of silence bound,  
And mid the crowds that compass them  
around

Still dwell in isolation night and morn,  
With knitted brow and cheek all passion-pale

Showing the baffled purpose of the mind.  
Hence is it I, that find no prayers avail  
To move my Lyric Mistress to be kind,  
Have stolen away into this leafy dale,  
Drawn by the flutings of the silvery  
wind.

VI

INSOMNIA

SLUMBER, hasten down this way,  
And, ere midnight dies,  
Silence lay upon my lips,  
Darkness on my eyes.

Send me a fantastic dream ;  
Fashion me afresh ;  
Into some celestial thing  
Change this mortal flesh.

Well I know one may not choose ;  
One is helpless still  
In the purple realm of Sleep :  
Use me as you will.

Let me be a frozen pine  
In dead glacier lands ;  
Let me pant, a leopard stretched  
On the Libyan sands.

Silver fin or scarlet wing  
Grant me, either one ;  
Sink me deep in emerald glooms,  
Lift me to the sun.

Or of me a gargoyle make,  
Face of ape or gnome,  
Such as frights the tavern-boor  
Reeling drunken home.

Work on me your own caprice,  
Give me any shape ;  
Only, Slumber, from myself  
Let myself escape !

VII

THRENODY

I

UPON your hearse this flower I lay.  
Brief be your sleep! You shall be  
known  
When lesser men have had their day:  
Fame blossoms where true seed is sown,  
Or soon or late, let Time wrong what it  
may.

II

Unvext by any dream of fame,  
You smiled, and bade the world pass  
by:  
But I — I turned, and saw a name  
Shaping itself against the sky —  
White star that rose amid the battle's  
flame!

## III

Brief be your sleep, for I would see  
Your laurels — ah, how trivial now  
To him must earthly laurel be  
Who wears the amaranth on his brow !  
How vain the voices of mortality !

## VIII

### “PILLARED ARCH AND SCULPTURED TOWER”

PILLARED arch and sculptured tower  
Of Ilium have had their hour;  
The dust of many a king is blown  
On the winds from zone to zone;  
Many a warrior sleeps unknown.  
Time and Death hold each in thrall,  
Yet is Love the lord of all;  
Still does Helen's beauty stir  
Because a poet sang of her !



IX

AT NIJNII-NOVGOROD

“ A CRAFTY Persian set this stone ;  
A dusk Sultana wore it ;  
And from her slender finger, sir,  
A ruthless Arab tore it.

“ A ruby, like a drop of blood —  
That deep-in tint that lingers  
And seems to melt, perchance was  
caught  
From those poor mangled fingers !

“ A spendthrift got it from the knave,  
And tost it, like a blossom,  
That night into a dancing-girl's  
Accurst and balmy bosom.

“ And so it went. One day a Jew  
At Cairo chanced to spy it

Amid a one-eyed peddler's pack,  
And did not care to buy it —

“Yet bought it all the same. You see,  
The Jew he knew a jewel.  
He bought it cheap to sell it dear :  
The ways of trade are cruel.

“But I — be Allah's all the praise ! —  
Such avarice, I scoff it !  
If I buy cheap, why, I sell cheap,  
Content with modest profit.

“This ring — such chasing ! look, milord,  
What workmanship ! By Heaven,  
The price I name you makes the thing  
As if the thing were given !

“A stone without a flaw ! A queen  
Might not disdain to wear it.  
Three hundred roubles buys the stone ;  
No kopeck less, I swear it !”

Thus Hassan, holding up the ring  
To me, no eager buyer. —  
A hundred roubles was not much  
To pay so sweet a liar !

X

THE WINTER ROBIN

*Sursum corda*

Now is that sad time of year  
When no flower or leaf is here ;  
When in misty Southern ways  
Oriole and jay have flown,  
And of all sweet birds, alone  
The robin stays.

So give thanks at Christmas-tide :  
Hopes of spring-time yet abide !  
See, in spite of darksome days,  
Wind and rain and bitter chill,  
Snow and sleet-hung branches, still  
The robin stays !

XI

ECHO-SONG

I

WHO can say where Echo dwells?  
In some mountain-cave, methinks,  
Where the white owl sits and blinks;  
Or in deep sequestered dells,  
Where the foxglove hangs its bells,  
Echo dwells.  
Echo!  
Echo!

II

Phantom of the crystal air,  
Daughter of sweet Mystery!  
Here is one has need of thee;  
Lead him to thy secret lair,  
Myrtle brings he for thy hair —  
Hear his prayer,  
Echo!  
Echo!

## III

Echo, lift thy drowsy head,  
And repeat each charmèd word  
Thou must needs have overheard  
Yestere'en ere, rosy-red,  
Daphne down the valley fled —  
Words unsaid,  
Echo!  
Echo !

## IV

Breathe the vows she since denies !  
She hath broken every vow ;  
What she would she would not now —  
Thou didst hear her perjuries.  
Whisper, whilst I shut my eyes,  
Those sweet lies,  
Echo !  
Echo !

## XII

### A MOOD

A BLIGHT, a gloom, I know not what,  
has crept upon my gladness —  
Some vague, remote ancestral touch of  
sorrow, or of madness ;  
A fear that is not fear, a pain that has  
not pain's insistence ;  
A sense of longing, or of loss, in some  
foregone existence ;  
A subtle hurt that never pen has writ  
nor tongue has spoken —  
Such hurt perchance as Nature feels  
when a blossomed bough is broken.

### XIII

#### SARGENT'S PORTRAIT OF EDWIN BOOTH AT "THE PLAYERS"

THAT face which no man ever saw  
And from his memory banished quite,  
With eyes in which are Hamlet's awe  
And Cardinal Richelieu's subtle light,  
Looks from this frame. A master's hand  
Has set the master-player here,  
In the fair temple that he planned  
Not for himself. To us most dear  
This image of him! "It was thus  
He looked; such pallor touched his  
cheek;

With that same grace he greeted us —  
Nay, 'tis the man, could it but speak!"  
Sad words that shall be said some day —  
Far fall the day! O cruel Time,  
Whose breath sweeps mortal things  
away,

Spare long this image of his prime,  
That others standing in the place  
Where, save as ghosts, we come no more,  
May know what sweet majestic face  
The gentle Prince of Players wore !



XIV

THORWALDSEN

NOT in the fabled influence of some  
star,

Benign or evil, do our fortunes lie :

We are the arbiters of destiny,

Lords of the life we either make or mar.

We are our own impediment and bar

To noble issues. With averted eye

We let the golden moment pass us by,

Time's foolish spendthrifts, searching  
wide and far

For what lies close at hand. To serve  
our turn

We ask fair wind and favorable tide.

From the dead Danish sculptor let us  
learn

To make Occasion, not to be denied :

Against the sheer precipitous mountain-  
side

Thorwaldsen carved his Lion at Lucerne.

XV

GUILLIELMUS REX

THE folk who lived in Shakespeare's day  
And saw that gentle figure pass  
By London Bridge, his frequent way —  
They little knew what man he was.

The pointed beard, the courteous mien,  
The equal port to high and low,  
All this they saw or might have seen —  
But not the light behind the brow !

The doublet's modest gray or brown,  
The slender sword-hilt's plain device,  
What sign had these for prince or clown?  
Few turned, or none, to scan him twice.

Yet 't was the king of England's kings !  
The rest with all their pomps and trains  
Are mouldered, half-remembered things —  
'T is he alone that lives and reigns !

XVI

A BRIDAL MEASURE

FOR S. F.

*Gifts they sent her manifold,  
Diamonds and pearls and gold.  
One there was among the throng  
Had not Midas' touch at need:  
He against a sylvan reed  
Set his lips and breathed a song.*

Bid bright Flora, as she comes,  
Snatch a spray of orange blooms  
    For a maiden's hair.  
Let the Hours their aprons fill  
With mignonette and daffodil,  
    And all that's fair.

For her bosom fetch the rose  
    That is rarest —  
Not that either these or those

Could by any happening be  
Ornaments to such as she;  
They'll but show, when she is dressed,  
She is fairer than the fairest  
And out-betters what is best!

XVII

IMOGEN

LEONATUS POSTHUMUS *speaks*:

SORROW, make a verse for me  
That shall breathe all human grieving;  
Let it be love's exequy,  
And the knell of all believing!  
Let it such sweet pathos have  
As a violet on a grave,  
Or a dove's moan when his mate  
Leaves the new nest desolate.  
Sorrow, Sorrow, by this token,  
Braid a wreath for Beauty's head. . . .  
Valley-lilies, one or two,  
Should be woven with the rue.  
Sorrow, Sorrow, all is spoken—  
She is dead!

XVIII

“LIKE CRUSOE, WALKING BY  
THE LONELY STRAND”

LIKE Crusoe, walking by the lonely  
strand  
And seeing a human footprint on the  
sand,  
Have I this day been startled, finding  
here,  
Set in brown mould and delicately clear,  
Spring's footprint — the first crocus of  
the year !  
O sweet invasion ! Farewell solitude !  
Soon shall wild creatures of the field and  
wood  
Flock from all sides with much ado and  
stir,  
And make of me most willing prisoner !

## XIX

### BATUSCHKA<sup>1</sup>

FROM yonder gilded minaret  
Beside the steel-blue Neva set,  
I faintly catch, from time to time,  
The sweet, aerial midnight chime —  
“ God save the Tsar ! ”

Above the ravelins and the moats  
Of the white citadel it floats ;  
And men in dungeons far beneath  
Listen, and pray, and gnash their teeth —  
“ God save the Tsar ! ”

The soft reiterations sweep  
Across the horror of their sleep,  
As if some dæmon in his glee

<sup>1</sup> “ Little Father,” or “ Dear Little Father,” a term of endearment applied to the Tsar in Russian folk-song.

Were mocking at their misery —  
“ God save the Tsar ! ”

In his Red Palace over there,  
Wakeful, he needs must hear the prayer.  
How can it drown the broken cries  
Wrung from his children's agonies ? —  
“ God save the Tsar ! ”

Father they called him from of old —  
Batuschka ! . . . How his heart is cold !  
Wait till a million scourgèd men  
Rise in their awful might, and then —  
God save the Tsar !



XX

A DEDICATION

TAKE these rhymes into thy grace,  
Since they are of thy begetting,  
Lady, that dost make each place  
Where thou art a jewel's setting.

Some such glamour lend this Book :  
Let it be thy poet's wages  
That henceforth thy gracious look  
Lies reflected on its pages.

XXI

SOLDIERS' SONG

(FROM "MERCEDES")

THE camp is hushed ; the fires burn low ;  
Like ghosts the sentries come and go :  
Now seen, now lost, upon the height  
A keen drawn sabre glimmers white.  
Swiftly the midnight steals away —  
*Reposez-vous, bons chevaliers !*

Perchance into your dream shall come  
Visions of love or thoughts of home ;  
The furtive night wind, hurrying by,  
Shall kiss away the half-breathed sigh,  
And softly whispering, seem to say,  
*Reposez-vous, bons chevaliers !*

Through star-lit dusk and shimmering  
dew  
It is your lady comes to you !

Delphine, Lisette, Annette — who knows  
By what sweet wayward name she goes?  
Wrapped in white arms till break of day,  
*Reposez-vous, bons chevaliers!*

XXII

APPARITIONS

At noon of night, and at the night's pale  
end,  
Such things have chanced to me  
As one, by day, would scarcely tell a  
friend  
For fear of mockery.

Shadows, you say, mirages of the brain!  
I know not, faith, not I.  
Is it more strange the dead should walk  
again  
Than that the quick should die?

## XXIII

### PRESCIENCE

THE new moon hung in the sky,  
The sun was low in the west,  
And my betrothed and I  
In the churchyard paused to rest —  
Happy maiden and lover,  
Dreaming the old dream over :  
The light winds wandered by,  
And robins chirped from the nest.

And lo ! in the meadow-sweet  
Was the grave of a little child,  
With a crumbling stone at the feet,  
And the ivy running wild —  
Tangled ivy and clover  
Folding it over and over :  
Close to my sweetheart's feet  
Was the little mound up-piled.

Stricken with nameless fears,  
    She shrank and clung to me,  
And her eyes were filled with tears  
    For a sorrow I did not see :  
        Lightly the winds were blowing,  
        Softly her tears were flowing —  
Tears for the unknown years  
    And a sorrow that was to be !

XXIV

TENNYSON

1890

I

SHAKESPEARE and Milton — what third  
blazoned name

Shall lips of after ages link to these?

His who, beside the wild encircling  
seas,

Was England's voice, her voice with one  
acclaim,

For threescore years; whose word of  
praise was fame,

Whose scorn gave pause to man's  
iniquities.

II

What strain was his in that Crimean  
war?

A bugle-call in battle; a low breath,

Plaintive and sweet, above the fields of  
death!

So year by year the music rolled afar,  
From Euxine wastes to flowery Kanda-  
har,  
Bearing the laurel or the cypress  
wreath.

## III

Others shall have their little space of  
time,  
Their proper niche and bust, then fade  
away  
Into the darkness, poets of a day;  
But thou, O builder of enduring rhyme,  
Thou shalt not pass! Thy fame in  
every clime  
On earth shall live where Saxon speech  
has sway.

## IV

Waft me this verse across the winter sea,  
Through light and dark, through mist  
and blinding sleet,  
O winter winds, and lay it at his feet;  
Though the poor gift betray my poverty,  
At his feet lay it: it may chance that he  
Will find no gift, where reverence is,  
unmeet.



XXV

“WHEN FROM THE TENSE  
CHORDS OF THAT MIGHTY  
LYRE ”

*January, 1892*

I

WHEN from the tense chords of that  
mighty lyre  
The Master's hand, relaxing, falls  
away,  
And those rich strings are silent for  
all time,  
Then shall Love pine, and Passion lack  
her fire,  
And Faith seem voiceless. Man to  
man shall say,  
“Dead is the last of England's lords  
of rhyme.”

## II

Yet — stay ! there 's one, a later laureled  
brow,  
With purple blood of poets in his veins ;  
Him has the Muse claimed ; him  
might Marlowe own ;  
Greek Sappho's son ! — men's praises  
seek him now.  
Happy the realm where one such voice  
remains !  
His the dropt wreath and the unen-  
vied throne.

## III

The wreath the world gives, not the  
mimic wreath  
That chance might make the gift of  
king or queen.  
O finder of undreamed-of harmonies !  
Since Shelley's lips were hushed by cruel  
death,  
What lyric voice so sweet as this has  
been  
Borne to us on the winds from over  
seas ?

XXVI

OUTWARD BOUND

I LEAVE behind me the elm-shadowed  
square  
And carven portals of the silent street,  
And wander on with listless, vagrant  
feet  
Through seaward-leading alleys, till the  
air  
Smells of the sea, and straightway then  
the care  
Slips from my heart, and life once more  
is sweet.  
At the lane's ending lie the white-winged  
fleet.  
O restless Fancy, whither wouldst thou  
fare?  
Here are brave pinions that shall take  
thee far —  
Gaunt hulks of Norway; ships of red  
Ceylon;

Slim-masted lovers of the blue Azores !  
'T is but an instant hence to Zanzibar,  
Or to the regions of the Midnight Sun :  
Ionian isles are thine, and all the fairy  
shores !

## XXVII

### HEREDITY

A SOLDIER of the Cromwell stamp,  
With sword and psalm-book by his side  
At home alike in church and camp :  
Austere he lived, and smileless died.

But she, a creature soft and fine —  
From Spain, some say, some say from  
    France :  
Within her veins leapt blood like wine —  
She led her Roundhead lord a dance !

In Grantham church they lie asleep ;  
Just where, the verger may not know.  
Strange that two hundred years should  
    keep  
The old ancestral fires aglow !

In me these two have met again ;  
To each my nature owes a part :  
To one, the cool and reasoning brain ;  
To one, the quick, unreasoning heart.

XXVIII

THE SAILING OF THE AUTO-  
CRAT

ON BOARD THE S. S. CEPHALONIA, APRIL  
26, 1886

I

O WIND and Wave, be kind to him !  
So, Wave and Wind, we give thee  
thanks !

O Fog, that from Newfoundland Banks  
Makest the blue bright ocean dim,  
Delay him not ! And ye who snare  
The wayworn shipman with your song,  
Go pipe your ditties otherwhere  
While this brave vessel plows along !  
If still to lure him be your thought,  
O phantoms of the watery zone,  
Be wary lest yourselves get caught  
With music sweeter than your own !

II

Yet, soft sea spirits, be not mute ;  
Murmur about the prow, and make  
Melodious the west wind's lute.  
For him may radiant mornings break  
From out the bosom of the deep,  
And golden noons above him bend,  
And fortunate constellations keep  
Bright vigils to his journey's end !

III

Take him, green Erin, to thy breast !  
Keep him, gray London — for a while !  
In him we send thee of our best,  
Our wisest word, our blithest smile —  
Our epigram, alert and pat,  
That kills with joy the folly hit —  
Our Yankee Tsar, our Autocrat  
Of all the happy realms of wit !  
Take him and keep him — but forbear  
To keep him more than half a year. . . .  
His presence will be sunshine there,  
His absence will be shadow here !

XXIX

PEPITA

SCARCELY sixteen years old  
Is Pepita. (You understand,  
A breath of this sunny land  
Turns green fruit into gold :

A maiden's conscious blood  
In the cheek of girlhood glows ;  
A bud slips into a rose  
Before it is quite a bud.)

And I in Seville — sedate,  
An American, with an eye  
For that strip of indigo sky  
Half-glimpsed through a Moorish gate —

I see her, sitting up there,  
With tortoise-shell comb and fan ;  
Red-lipped, but a trifle wan,  
Because of her coal-black hair ;



And the hair a trifle dull,  
Because of the eyes beneath,  
And the radiance of her teeth  
When her smile is at its full.

Against the balcony rail  
She leans, and looks on the street;  
Her lashes, long and discreet,  
Shading her eyes like a veil.

Held by a silver dart,  
The mantilla's delicate lace  
Falls each side of her face  
And crosswise over her heart.

This is Pepita — this  
Her hour for taking her ease:  
A lover under the trees  
In the *calle* were not amiss !

Well, I must needs pass by,  
With a furtive glance, be it said,  
At the dusk Murillo head  
And the Andalusian eye.

In the Plaza I hear the sounds  
Of guitar and castanet ;

Although it is early yet,  
The dancers are on their rounds.

Softly the sunlight falls  
On the slim Giralda tower,  
That now peals forth the hour  
O'er broken ramparts and walls.

Ah, what glory and gloom  
In this Arab-Spanish town !  
What masonry, golden-brown,  
And hung with tendril and bloom !

Place of forgotten kings ! —  
With fountains that never play,  
And gardens where day by day  
The lonely cicada sings.

Traces are everywhere  
Of the dusky race that came,  
And passed, like a sudden flame,  
Leaving their sighs in the air !

Taken with things like these,  
Pepita fades out of my mind :  
Pleasure enough I find  
In Moorish column and frieze.

And yet I have my fears,  
If this had been long ago,  
I might . . . well, I do not know . . .  
She with her sixteen years !

XXX

BOOKS AND SEASONS

BECAUSE the sky is blue; because blithe  
    May  
Masks in the wren's note and the lilac's  
    hue ;  
Because — in fine, because the sky is blue  
I will read none but piteous tales to-day.  
Keep happy laughter till the skies be  
    gray,  
And the sad season cypress wears, and  
    rue ;  
Then, when the wind is moaning in the  
    flue,  
And ways are dark, bid Chaucer make us  
    gay.  
But now a little sadness ! All too sweet  
This springtide riot, this most poignant  
    air,

This sensuous sphere of color and perfume !

So listen, love, while I the woes repeat  
Of Hamlet and Ophelia, and that pair  
Whose bridal bed was builded in a tomb.

XXXI

DISCIPLINE

IN the crypt at the foot of the stairs  
They lay there, a score of the Dead :  
They could hear the priest at his prayers,  
And the litany overhead.

They knew when the great crowd stirred  
As the Host was lifted on high ;  
And they smiled in the dark when they  
    heard  
Some light-footed nun trip by.

Side by side on their shelves  
For years and years they lay ;  
And those who misbehaved themselves  
Had their coffin-plates taken away.

Thus is the legend told  
In black-letter monkish rhyme,  
Explaining those plaques of gold  
That vanished from time to time !

XXXII

THE LETTER

EDWARD ROWLAND SILL, DIED FEBRUARY 27,  
1887

I HELD his letter in my hand,  
And even while I read  
The lightning flashed across the land  
The word that he was dead.

How strange it seemed ! His living voice  
Was speaking from the page  
Those courteous phrases, tersely choice,  
Light-hearted, witty, sage.

I wondered what it was that died !  
The man himself was here,  
His modesty, his scholar's pride,  
His soul serene and clear.

These neither death nor time shall dim,  
Still this sad thing must be —  
Henceforth I may not speak to him,  
Though he can speak to me !

XXXIII

ON LYNN TERRACE

ALL day to watch the blue wave curl and  
break,  
All night to hear it plunging on the  
shore —  
In this sea-dream such draughts of life I  
take,  
I cannot ask for more.

Behind me lie the idle life and vain,  
The task unfinished, and the weary  
hours ;  
That long wave softly bears me back to  
Spain  
And the Alhambra's towers.

Once more I halt in Andalusian pass,  
To list the mule-bells jingling on the  
height ;  
Below, against the dull esparto grass,  
The almonds glimmer white.



Huge gateways, wrinkled, with rich grays  
and browns,

Invite my fancy, and I wander through  
The gable-shadowed, zigzag streets of  
towns

The world's first sailors knew.

Or, if I will, from out this thin sea-  
haze

Low-lying cliffs of lovely Calais rise ;  
Or yonder, with the pomp of olden days,  
Venice salutes my eyes.

Or some gaunt castle lures me up its  
stair ;

I see, far off, the red-tiled hamlets  
shine,  
And catch, through slits of windows here  
and there,  
Blue glimpses of the Rhine.

Again I pass Norwegian fjord and fell,  
And through bleak wastes to where  
the sunset's fires

Light up the white-walled Russian cita-  
del,

The Kremlin's domes and spires.

And now I linger in green English lanes,  
By garden-plots of rose and helio-  
trope;  
And now I face the sudden pelting rains  
On some lone Alpine slope.

Now at Tangier, among the packed ba-  
zaars,  
I saunter, and the merchants at the  
doors  
Smile, and entice me: here are jewels  
like stars,  
And curved knives of the Moors;

Cloths of Damascus, strings of amber  
dates;  
What would Howadji . . . silver, gold,  
or stone?  
Prone on the sun-scorched plain outside  
the gates  
The camels make their moan.

All this is mine, as I lie dreaming here,  
High on the windy terrace, day by  
day;  
And mine the children's laughter, sweet  
and clear,  
Ringing across the bay.

For me the clouds; the ships sail by for  
me;

For me the petulant sea-gull takes its  
flight;

And mine the tender moonrise on the sea,  
And hollow caves of night.

XXXIV

ANDROMEDA

THE smooth-worn coin and threadbare  
    classic phrase  
Of Grecian myths that did beguile my  
    youth,  
Beguile me not as in the olden days :  
I think more grief and beauty dwell with  
    truth.  
Andromeda, in fetters by the sea,  
Star-pale with anguish till young Perseus  
    came,  
Less moves me with her suffering than  
    she,  
The slim girl figure fettered to dark  
    shame,  
That nightly haunts the park, there, like  
    a shade,  
Trailing her wretchedness from street to  
    street.

See where she passes — neither wife nor  
maid.

How all mere fiction crumbles at her feet !  
Here is woe's self, and not the mask of  
woe :

A legend's shadow shall not move you so !

XXXV

“I ’LL NOT CONFER WITH  
SORROW ”

I ’LL not confer with Sorrow  
Till to-morrow ;  
But Joy shall have her way  
This very day.

Ho, eglantine and cresses  
For her tresses ! —  
Let Care, the beggar, wait  
Outside the gate.

Tears if you will — but after  
Mirth and laughter ;  
Then, folded hands on breast  
And endless rest.

XXXVI

NO SONGS IN WINTER

THE sky is gray as gray may be,  
There is no bird upon the bough,  
There is no leaf on vine or tree.

In the Neponset marshes now  
Willow-stems, rosy in the wind,  
Shiver with hidden sense of snow.

So, too, 't is winter in my mind,  
No light-winged fancy comes and stays :  
A season churlish and unkind.

Slow creep the hours, slow creep the days,  
The black ink crusts upon the pen —  
Wait till the bluebirds, wrens, and jays,  
And golden orioles come again !

XXXVII

TWO MOODS

I

BETWEEN the budding and the falling leaf  
Stretch happy skies ;  
With colors and sweet cries  
Of mating birds in uplands and in glades  
The world is rife.  
Then on a sudden all the music dies,  
The color fades.  
How fugitive and brief  
Is mortal life  
Between the budding and the falling leaf !

O short-breathed music, dying on the  
tongue  
Ere half the mystic canticle be sung !  
O harp of life, so speedily unstrung !  
Who, if 't were his to choose, would  
know again  
The bitter sweetness of the lost refrain,  
Its rapture, and its pain ?



## II

Though I be shut in darkness, and be-  
come  
Insentient dust blown idly here and there,  
I count oblivion a scant price to pay  
For having once had held against my lip  
Life's brimming cup of hydromel and  
rue —  
For having once known woman's holy  
love  
And a child's kiss, and for a little space  
Been boon companion to the Day and  
Night,  
Fed on the odors of the summer dawn,  
And folded in the beauty of the stars.  
Dear Lord, though I be changed to  
senseless clay,  
And serve the potter as he turns his  
wheel,  
I thank Thee for the gracious gift of  
tears!

XXXVIII

ANDALUSIAN CRADLE-SONG

(FROM "MERCEDES")

WHO is it opens her blue bright eye,  
Bright as the sea and blue as the sky ? —  
Chiquita !

Who has the smile that comes and goes  
Like sunshine over her mouth's red  
rose ? —  
*Muchachita !*

What is the softest laughter heard,  
Gurgle of brook or trill of bird,  
Chiquita ?  
Nay, 't is thy laughter makes the rill  
Hush its voice and the bird be still,  
*Muchachita !*

Ah, little flower-hand on my breast,  
How it soothes me and gives me rest !  
Chiquita !

What is the sweetest sight I know?

Three little white teeth in a row,

Three little white teeth in a row,

*Muchachita!*

XXXIX

THE VOICE OF THE SEA

IN the hush of the autumn night  
I hear the voice of the sea,  
In the hush of the autumn night  
It seems to say to me —  
Mine are the winds above,  
Mine are the caves below,  
Mine are the dead of yesterday  
And the dead of long ago !

And I think of the fleet that sailed  
From the lovely Gloucester shore,  
I think of the fleet that sailed  
And came back nevermore ;  
My eyes are filled with tears,  
And my heart is numb with woe —  
It seems as if 't were yesterday,  
And it all was long ago !

XL

“I VEX ME NOT WITH BROOD-  
ING ON THE YEARS”

I VEX me not with brooding on the years  
That were ere I drew breath : why should  
    I then  
Distrust the darkness that may fall again  
When life is done ? Perchance in other  
    spheres —  
Dead planets — I once tasted mortal  
    tears,  
And walked as now among a throng of  
    men,  
Pondering things that lay beyond my  
    ken,  
Questioning death, and solacing my fears.  
Ofttimes indeed strange sense have I of  
    this,  
Vague memories that hold me with a  
    spell,  
Touches of unseen lips upon my brow,

Breathing some incommunicable bliss !  
In years foregone, O Soul, was all not  
    well ?  
Still lovelier life awaits thee. Fear not  
    thou !

XLI

A SERENADE

I

IMP of Dreams, when she 's asleep,  
To her snowy chamber creep,  
And straight whisper in her ear  
What, awake, she will not hear —  
    Imp of Dreams, when she 's asleep.

II

Tell her, so she may repent,  
That no rose withholds its scent,  
That no bird that has a song  
Hoards the music summer-long —  
    Tell her, so she may repent.

III

Tell her there 's naught else to do,  
If to-morrow's skies be blue,  
But to come, with civil speech,  
And walk with me to Hampton Beach —

Tell her there 's naught else to do !

Tell her, so she may repent —

Imp of Dreams, when she 's asleep !



XLII

A REFRAIN

HIGH in a tower she sings,  
I, passing by beneath,  
Pause and listen, and catch  
These words of passionate breath —  
“ *Asphodel, flower of Life; amaranth,  
flower of Death!* ”

Sweet voice, sweet unto tears!  
What is this that she saith?  
Poignant, mystical — hark!  
Again, with passionate breath —  
“ *Asphodel, flower of Life; amaranth,  
flower of Death!* ”

XLIII

“GREAT CAPTAIN, GLORIOUS  
IN OUR WARS”

GREAT Captain, glorious in our wars —  
No meed of praise we hold from him;  
About his brow we wreath the stars  
The coming ages shall not dim.

The cloud-sent man ! Was it not he  
That from the hand of adverse fate  
Snatched the white flower of victory?  
He spoke no word, but saved the State.

Yet History, as she brooding bends  
Above the tablet on her knee,  
The impartial stylus half suspends,  
And fain would blot the cold decree :

“The iron hand and sleepless care  
That stayed disaster scarce availed  
To save him when he came to wear  
The civic laurel : there he failed.”

Who runs may read ; but nothing mars  
That nobler record, unforgot.  
Great Captain, glorious in our wars —  
All else the heart remembers not.

## XLIV

### REMINISCENCE

THOUGH I am native to this frozen zone  
That half the twelvemonth torpid lies, or  
dead ;

Though the cold azure arching overhead  
And the Atlantic's never-ending moan  
Are mine by heritage, I must have known  
Life elsewhere in epochs long since fled ;  
For in my veins some Orient blood is red,  
And through my thought are lotus blossoms blown.

I do remember . . . it was just at dusk,  
Near a walled garden at the river's turn  
(A thousand summers seem but yesterday !)

A Nubian girl, more sweet than Khoorja  
musk,

Came to the water-tank to fill her urn,  
And, with the urn, she bore my heart  
away !

XLV

BROKEN MUSIC

A note

All out of tune in this world's instrument.

AMY LEVY.

I KNOW not in what fashion she was  
made,

Nor what her voice was, when she  
used to speak,  
Nor if the silken lashes threw a shade  
On wan or rosy cheek.

I picture her with sorrowful vague eyes  
Illumed with such strange gleams of  
inner light

As linger in the drift of London skies  
Ere twilight turns to night.

I know not ; I conjecture. 'T was a girl  
That with her own most gentle desper-  
ate hand

From out God's mystic setting plucked  
life's pearl —  
'T is hard to understand.

So precious life is! Even to the old  
The hours are as a miser's coins, and  
she —  
Within her hands lay youth's unminted  
gold  
And all felicity.

The winged impetuous spirit, the white  
flame  
That was her soul once, whither has it  
flown?  
Above her brow gray lichens blot her  
name  
Upon the carven stone.

This is her Book of Verses — wren-like  
notes,  
Shy franknesses, blind gropings, haunt-  
ing fears;  
At times across the chords abruptly floats  
A mist of passionate tears.

A fragile lyre too tensely keyed and  
strung,

A broken music, weirdly incomplete:  
Here a proud mind, self-baffled and self-  
stung,

Lies coiled in dark defeat.

XLVI

COMEDY

THEY parted, with clasps of hand  
And kisses, and burning tears.  
They met, in a foreign land,  
After some twenty years :

Met as acquaintances meet,  
Smilingly, tranquil-eyed —  
Not even the least little beat  
Of the heart, upon either side.

They chatted of this and that,  
The nothings that make up life ;  
She in a Gainsborough hat,  
And he in black for his wife.



XLVII

SEEMING DEFEAT

I

THE woodland silence, one time stirred  
By the soft pathos of some passing bird,  
Is not the same it was before.  
The spot where once, unseen, a flower  
Has held its fragile chalice to the shower,  
Is different for evermore.  
Unheard, unseen  
A spell has been!

II

O thou that breathest year by year  
Music that falls unheeded on the ear,  
Take heart, fate has not baffled thee!  
Thou that with tints of earth and skies

Fillest thy canvas for unseeing eyes,  
Thou hast not labored futilely.  
Unheard, unseen  
A spell has been !

## XLVIII

### A PETITION

To spring belongs the violet, and the  
blown

Spice of the roses let the summer own.

Grant me this favor, Muse — all else  
withhold —

That I may not write verse when I am  
old.

And yet I pray you, Muse, delay the time !

Be not too ready to deny me rhyme ;

And when the hour strikes, as it must,  
dear Muse,

I beg you very gently break the news.

## QUITS

*If my best wines mislike thy taste,  
And my best service win thy frown,  
Then tarry not, I bid thee haste ;  
There's many another Inn in town.*







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